

Chair Manning, Vice Chair Fowler Arthur, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Cindy Ross, and I am the Career Tech Workforce Education program coordinator at Bowling Green State University. In my position at BGSU, I work closely with individuals hired from industry to teach in middle school through high school career technical programs. We are very fortunate in the State of Ohio to have vibrant Career Technical Education programs. On a regular basis I visit CTE programs in large career tech centers, urban and rural schools, credit recovery schools, charter schools, youth juvenal facilities and adult prisons. This past year, BGSU faculty and university mentors visited the classrooms of 209 new career tech teachers throughout the state of Ohio. Career Tech teachers in these various types of school programs come to the teaching profession with educational backgrounds ranging from High School Diplomas or GEDs to doctoral degrees. Once hired by a Career Tech program, State of Ohio law currently requires an individual without a teaching license to enroll in a 24-credit hour program that focuses on curriculum development, classroom management, lab safety, assessment, work-based learning, soft skills, literacy, and adolescent motivation.

HB432 has been introduced as a change in licensure to allow for flexibility of how individuals earn a teaching license through the state. Specifically, 2 alternative pathways from the 24 credit hour coursework are established in the bill. BGSU is more than willing to be a part of the discussion to change licensure, but we have a great deal of concern with one of the proposed alternative pathways in the bill. This alternative pathway would completely do away with the required teacher preparation college courses and replaces the course work with 90 -hours of professional development approved by the school district.

Career Tech can be found in middle school through high school environments. Many of these schools, including rural, urban and charter school do not have the staff to create and provide 90 hours of PD. This alternative pathway may not even be a choice for some of these schools to host their own PD. This will put these smaller career tech providers at a disadvantage.

The bill does not define the expected content of the professional development. For example, how will the current state law that requires all teachers to take a 3-credit hour reading literacy course be addressed in this pathway? The bill also allows school superintendents to determine “adequate progress” of professional development to renew a 2-year license. This language provides the potential for many inconsistencies with completion of PD in the state by new career tech teachers.

Some of the requirements of education and license of Career Tech programs require more hours of training than 90 hours. For example, Ohio Law requires individuals to complete 1,500 hours of training for a cosmetologist license, yet HB432 will only require their teacher to complete 90 hours of PD in educational content to be a licensed teacher.

We have yet to see research that supports a complete removal of required professional education college courses. How will this help with the teacher shortage? Is the college course requirement really the barrier to hiring and retaining CTE teachers? A recent research article published in the Educational Research Journal examines the teacher exit and educational opportunities in Career and Technical Education. According to the article, CTE teachers with alternative licenses and in

high-growth areas such as health care, IT and STEM fields are more likely to leave the profession and earn 20% more in their industry. The teacher shortage in these areas is parallel with the strong demand of these employees in the private sector. It is important to consider all the reasons for the teacher shortage and creatively design opportunities for those in industry who might be considering a career change to teaching to begin taking coursework prior to making the career move.

Lastly, where is the incentive to advance a career path in education? Where will our next Career Tech program leaders come from? Currently, teachers enrolled in the 24 credit hour university programs can apply coursework towards associate's, bachelor's, and master's degrees. Many school districts award teachers on a pay scale for advance degrees. Just this week, I worked with a career tech teacher in our program who with their associate degree, the 24 credit hours for her teaching license and additional coursework will graduate with their bachelor's degree this summer. They will begin the coursework for their master's degree in education in the fall semester. Another individual in our program was able to apply the licensure coursework towards a degree in Leadership Studies and will graduate in December. Their intention is to take on a Career Tech Leadership role in their school district. The college coursework should be presented to new career tech teachers as an opportunity for personal and professional growth and not just a requirement for the teaching job.

The position of a CTE teacher is a very rewarding profession, yet very challenging. These individuals spend 6 to 7 hours a day for 9 months with their students. We know from our close work with new CTE teachers that many struggle with classroom management, instructional strategies, motivating students, understanding the impact of home lives on education and the transition of working with adults to working with middle schooler and/or teenagers. CTE teachers should be provided as much support and educational knowledge for students to be engaged, safe, motivated, and successful in their education. Eliminating the required college coursework to educate and support career tech teachers is not the answer.

Thank you for your time and I will take any questions you may have.

Respectfully submitted,
Cindy Ross